

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

US rulers deploy National Guard,
target workers' jobs, rights
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 84/NO. 15 APRIL 20, 2020

PG&E bosses cop a plea to manslaughter in fire deaths

BY JEFF POWERS

OAKLAND, Calif. — On March 23 Pacific Gas & Electric bosses struck a plea bargain with the Butte County District Attorney's Office, saying they would admit guilt on felony counts stemming from the deadly 2018 Camp Fire and pay a \$4 million fine. The deal avoids jail time for company officers who plead guilty to 84 counts of manslaughter and one count of unlawfully causing the fire.

PG&E has already been convicted of felony in previous fires. In 2017 the company was found guilty on six felony charges after a pipeline explosion killed eight people and injured dozens more in the San Francisco suburb of San Bruno.

Have you ever heard of another case where someone skips prison after admitting to killing people, not once but twice?

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Bangladesh: Workers fight moves to shut off jobs, pay

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Workers in the centers of garment production in Asia and elsewhere are taking heavy blows from decisions taken by the capitalist bosses in Europe and North America to shut down whole sections of their economies, including much of the clothing trade.

As retail giants in the imperialist countries cancel or postpone orders with their suppliers, thousands of factories are threatened with closure and tens of millions of workers and their families risk losing their livelihoods.

"It's difficult to know how many factories are still running and how many are closed," Nazma Akter, president of the labor union Somnilito Garments Sramik Federation, told the *Militant* by phone from Dhaka, Bangladesh, April 7. "They keep going until all their orders are produced. But many, many workers have been sent home."

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Join fights for jobs, higher wages, better conditions!



Perdue workers in Kathleen, Georgia, walked off job March 23 to protest job conditions, bosses scorn for them. "The line is too fast," one worker said. "There's chicken all over the floor."

Demand mass public works program to provide jobs!

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party 2020 candidate for U.S. president, issued the following statement April 8. Malcolm Jarrett is the party's 2020 vice presidential candidate.

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STATEMENT

Workers face an urgent need to defend ourselves from the bosses' assaults today. The only way the capitalists can defend their profits is to step up attacks on those still working, at the same time they throw others of us out on the street. Workers gain confidence when we organize to resist bosses' ceaseless efforts to make us

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Dairy farmers forced to dump milk while stores are running out

BY ZENA JASPER AND
ROY LANDERSEN

RICHLAND CENTER, Wis. — Dairy farmers are being forced to dump fresh milk while millions face going short of dairy and food supplies due to government shutdowns and mass unemployment.

Stores like Walmart and Costco are limiting how much milk customers can buy due to shortages — a result of panic-buying induced by the bosses' response to today's social crisis. Despite this strong demand, dairy farmers in New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and elsewhere have been told by big processing plant bosses to dump tens of millions of gallons of milk.

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Today's social crisis is product of capitalist rule

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The lockdowns imposed by governments from North America to western Europe, Uganda to Argentina, and around the world — one of the rulers' key steps to try and defend their capitalist system in a time of deep economic and social crisis — have thrown millions out of work. Most workers today have little money set aside, and the widespread jobless-

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As 2020 elections take a time out, Congress passes bailout for bosses

BY TERRY EVANS

The 2020 presidential campaign is taking a back seat following the shutdown of many of the bosses' factories and other workplaces, as a deep-going social crisis confronts the working class.

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Use *Militant* to advance discussions on the class-struggle road forward



SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy, left, and Helen Meyers, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress, talk with laid-off worker Damario Armstrong in Plymouth, Minnesota.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Socialist Workers Party members and supporters are stepping up efforts to use the *Militant* to discuss what we face today with fellow working people and to join with them to fight the bosses' attempts to make us pay for the crisis of the capitalist system.

Along with participating in struggles on the job for better working conditions, for union rights and for higher pay, this involves exchanging views with workers, farmers, owner-operators and self-employed storekeep-

ers — all those exploited by capital — in cities and towns and rural areas across the country.

That's why the *Militant* has begun a six-week drive to win new readers and to get books by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and other revolutionaries into the hands of those who can use them, as well as win contributions to the \$115,000 *Militant* Fighting Fund. The drive ends May 19.

The *Militant* tells the truth about why capitalism needs to be replaced.

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Strike against Asarco union busting continues

Cuba vs US: Counterposed class approaches to human solidarity

BY SETH GALINSKY

Many working people in the United States are inspired when they learn how revolutionary Cuba confronts crises from hurricanes, droughts or today’s coronavirus outbreak, as opposed to the capitalist rulers in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Tens of thousands of members of Cuba’s mass organizations, including the trade unions, the Federation of Cuban Women, and the neighborhood Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, as well as medical students and others, have been organized to go door to door across this island-nation looking to find *everyone* who might be sick, infected or need help.

The figures sound impossible — on March 26, volunteers checked in on 4,782,231 people, including 521,364 senior citizens, who are most vulnerable to the disease. On March 30, they checked on 8,358,561! Many of these are the second or third visits.

They make sure that anyone who needs medical attention, gets it. The message — no one is left on their own.

That’s how working people and their government transformed by a social revolution and reorganization of society based on people’s needs, not on profit, deals with every challenge. That’s why U.S. bosses and their government are determined to overturn their revolution.

Cuban revolutionaries also “share what they have, not what’s left over” in aiding others around the world. Some 30,000 Cuban health care workers are volunteers providing medical care in 65 countries around the world. Their numbers have been boosted in

the last few weeks by internationalist brigades responding to requests from 15 countries in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean to aid in fighting the current epidemic.

Unlike Cuba where health care is a right, under capitalism it’s just another commodity, used to fill the coffers of giant insurance, pharmaceutical and hospital corporations.

When Danni Askini started feeling chest pain in February in the Boston area, *Time* magazine reported, her doctor told her to go to a hospital emergency room. When she got there, they told her it was likely pneumonia and sent her home. When the bill came, it was \$5,645.

She got sicker and went back to the ER twice, where they tested and treated her and sent her home again. Three days later they told her she had COVID-19. Then she got the total bill — \$34,927.43!

Everything costs. And the message is: You’re on your own.

Cuba is different because working people — led by Fidel Castro, the Rebel Army and the July 26 Movement — made a revolution in 1959, replacing the U.S.-backed capitalist dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista with their own workers and farmers government. This new state power is the mightiest weapon working people have to defend their class interests.

Working people are also organizing to confront the deepening impact of the worldwide capitalist economic depression and standstill in trade, on top of Washington’s over 60-year-long economic war against them, which makes it ever harder to get imports, including food, oil and raw materials needed for



Trabajadores/Heriberto González Brito

Suchel Camacho soap factory, Havana. Revolutionary government in Cuba is organizing working people to increase food, industrial production in face of world capitalist economic crisis.

agriculture and industry.

The Cuban government is not shutting down factories, it’s relying on working people to work together to increase production of the products the Cuban people need, whatever the difficulties.

An article in *Juventud Rebelde* April 3 describes how vegetable farmers are looking for alternatives to scarce fuel, fertilizer and pesticides,

including new ways to irrigate their fields. “We’re not stopping,” said Luis Pentón Ramírez, a farmer in Banao, Sancti Spiritus. “We can’t leave people without their plate of food.”

In the U.S., where capitalists are looking for every way they can to profit off the epidemic, the price of eggs in many stores in New York City has more than

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Workers say ‘Yes!’ to giving ‘blood money’ to build SWP

During the last week in March, Walmart workers from five cities sent in a total of \$1,774 to help build the Socialist Workers Party from MyShare bonuses — attempted bribes — they received from the bosses.

“I’m writing a check to the party with pride for the ‘blood money’ I received in my paycheck,” wrote Walmart worker Maggie Trowe from Louisville, Kentucky. “We got a paltry 2% raise, 28 cents for me. We are told that a crew of two can do the work that requires three or four. We fight against unloading refrigerated trucks when there’s ice on the floor.” Trowe, along with four other Walmart workers from the Louisville area, sent in \$345.14.

“I have discussed how the bonuses are ‘blood money’ with many co-workers,” Samir Hazboun said. “Most detest the fact that Walmart punishes them for attendance occurrences, accidents and such. More now want to discuss why I choose to give it to the SWP and admire that decision.”

Communists use the term “blood money” to describe production, attendance, safety and other so-called bonuses bosses offer, hoping to get workers to keep quiet about speedup, low pay and unsafe working conditions.

Walmart workers from the San Francisco Bay Area sent in checks totaling \$282.49. “The company has announced an extra bonus of \$300 for full-time and \$150 for part-time workers to get us to overlook the speedup in the stores today as they rake in extra profits from increased sales,” Betsey Stone wrote. “We’re looking forward to sending these checks in soon.”

Other “blood money” checks the party received include \$719.68 from Atlanta, \$218.10 from Chicago and \$210 from Seattle. These contributions turn attempted bribes by the bosses into helping build a fighting working-class party!

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

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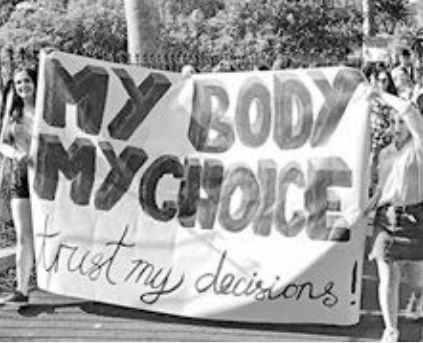
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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

THE MILITANT

Defend women’s right to choose abortion

The right of women to choose if and when to have children, to have access to family planning and abortion, is both a fundamental right and essential to unite the working class. The ‘Militant’ covers protests defending the right to abortion from Argentina to New Zealand.



Militant/Mike Tucker

Feb. 18 abortion rights march, New Zealand.

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Use *Militant* to advance fights

Continued from front page

The SWP candidates for president and vice president, Alyson Kennedy and Malcolm Jarrett, point a way forward to defend our wages and working conditions on the road to fighting to take political power. (See platform below.)

“The bosses and their government want us to believe that what we face is caused by a virus,” Kennedy told campaign supporters in Minneapolis. “This is not a health crisis but a social crisis caused by their capitalist system.”

Struggle builds workers’ confidence

More than 10 million have been thrown out of work. “They want us to believe that all we can do is wait it out and stay home,” Kennedy said. “We say we need to be at work with fellow workers, in order to multiply resistance.

“Through fights on the job we gain more confidence in our ability to push the bosses back,” she added. “This is the road to building a workers’ movement that can fight for the demands we raise on our campaign button: ‘For workers control of production’ and ‘Build a labor party.’”

As well as participating in these fights, campaign supporters introduce the *Militant*, which speaks out about workers’ struggles, police violence, attacks on women’s rights, Washington’s violation of the sovereignty of other nations and government restrictions on democratic rights.

While in Plymouth, just west of Minneapolis, Kennedy and campaign supporter Kevin Dwire spoke with Chase Bryan Hendrickson, who works at the Amazon fulfillment center in Shakopee. He got a subscription to the *Militant*.

“They have us working 10-hour shifts with staggered start times to distance workers at entrances,” Hendrickson said. “Amazon is taking workers’ temperatures.”

Kennedy noted that other bosses have taken similar measures. “The bosses want us to fall into the trap of blaming each other for the spread of coronavirus instead of their system,” she said. “Workers shouldn’t look to the bosses, like asking them to test all the workers. We need to organize and fight together for better conditions like higher wages and control of the pace of production.”

Kennedy joined Helen Meyers, SWP candidate for Congress in the 4th District, to speak with Damario Armstrong, who is laid off from his shipping job. “They only talk about the virus, and then they prioritize some people over others for treatment,” Armstrong said, referring to the government.

“I don’t agree with what those who say race is the main problem today,” added Armstrong, who is a young African American. “It’s money.”

“The capitalists use race to divide us

and keep our wages down,” Kennedy said. “The capitalist system is the problem. The working class needs to organize and build solidarity.” She showed Armstrong, who got an introductory subscription to the *Militant*, the book *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*, which explains that by fighting together workers gain confidence in ourselves. The book’s introduction describes how the mass struggles that brought down Jim Crow segregation in the South transformed those who participated in them and strengthened the whole working class.

Victor Brooks told Malcolm Jarrett and David Rosenfeld, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Minnesota, that with living costs so high, “How can I retire? I pay \$1,300 for rent. I’d rather go back home to Liberia.” Brooks, an assembler at a medical equipment manufacturer, moved to the U.S. in the 1980s. “When you get old, you get nothing.”

Jarrett said, “What they value is what you can produce for them, what profits they can make from you. When the capitalists think you are no longer of use to them, they throw you away.”

Brooks said he thought the Socialist Workers Party “should be global. I want to know how I can help when I return to Liberia.”

Rosenfeld said, “You are part of the working class in the U.S. The best way to prepare to return to your birth country is to join us in building the workers’ movement here today.”

Brooks subscribed to the *Militant* and bought *Tribunes of the People* and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, by SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes. Both titles along with *The Turn to Industry: Forging a*



Militant/Alyson Kennedy

SWP vice presidential candidate Malcolm Jarrett, left, and David Rosenfeld, U.S. Senate candidate in Minnesota, during KFAI radio interview with them and Alyson Kennedy. It airs April 10.

Proletarian Party, also by Barnes, are available together for only \$30.

Response to Militant Fighting Fund

Unlike other papers, which depend on advertising revenue, the *Militant* is entirely funded by working people attracted to the working-class struggles it reports and the revolutionary perspective it presents. “People have responded really rapidly,” said Valerie Johnson, the paper’s business manager, noting that as of April 7, 18 people have already sent in contributions totaling over \$3,115.

Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Georgia, went to talk with working people in Perry, a town of 17,000, where Perdue poultry plant workers walked off the job to protest job conditions and pay March 23.

Fruit and campaign supporters spoke with hospital, government and poultry workers there. They sold eight copies

of the *Militant* and a subscription. “One Perdue worker told me, ‘The line is too fast. There’s chicken all over the floor,’” Fruit said. “I told him that’s exactly why workers need to fight for control of production, including line speed.”

Contribute to the *Militant*, help win new readers

Help expand the reach of the *Militant*. Show the paper and the book specials to your co-workers, neighbors, friends and relatives. Contribute to the Militant Fighting Fund.

See page 8 to find a distributor near you to join in the campaigns. Or contact themilitant@mac.com. Send contributions to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Socialist Workers Party 2020 campaign platform

This is the SWP’s fighting campaign platform to confront the economic, social and moral crisis caused by capitalism:

UNIONS/FOR A LABOR PARTY Support workers’ struggles to organize to defend themselves, to use union power on behalf of ourselves and all working people. Workers need their own party, a labor party. *One* union for *all* drivers — taxi, Uber, Lyft, other app-based and car service drivers! Support farmworkers in their fight to organize unions and for safe working conditions.

AMNESTY FOR ALL UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS in the US, a life-and-death question for the unions to unite workers and cut across divisions the bosses use to drive down wages. For access to driver’s licenses for all.

JOBS Fight for a federal government-financed public works program to put millions to work at union-scale wages building roads, bridges, hospitals, child care centers, mass transportation and quality affordable housing workers need. Set the minimum wage to allow workers to have a home and support a family.

OPPOSE WASHINGTON’S WARS US hands off Iran, Venezuela and Cuba. US troops out of Afghanistan, Korea, the Middle East. End US colonial rule in Puerto Rico.

CUBA’S REVOLUTION — AN EXAMPLE End the US rulers’ economic war against Cuba; US out of Guantánamo. The Cuban Revolution in 1959

showed it is possible for workers and farmers to transform themselves in struggle, to take political power and uproot capitalist exploitation.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL Fight for universal, government-guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care, and retirement income for all.

ABORTION Defend women’s right to unrestricted access to family planning services, including the right to safe, secure abortions.

ISRAEL & PALESTINE For the recognition of Israel and of a contiguous Palestinian state. For the right of Jews to return to Israel as a refuge in the face of capitalist crisis, Jew-hatred and murderous violence.

WORKERS CONTROL OVER PRODUCTION The bosses and their government lie to working people about their production costs and profits, while they insist they can’t afford to pay higher wages. Demand they open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. To prevent capitalist collusion and thievery — and their production of shoddy and dangerous goods like the Boeing 737 MAX — workers in their millions will need to fight for control of production, a step towards taking political power and a school for running the economy for ourselves in the interests of all.

“JUSTICE” SYSTEM Fight against police brutality, racist discrimination and the entire capitalist injustice system with its frame-ups, “plea bargains,”

onerous bail and outrageous prison sentences, all of which disproportionately hit workers who are Black. For the right to vote for ex-prisoners and all workers behind bars.

POLITICAL RIGHTS Defend democratic rights — the right to vote, to free speech and assembly and to bear arms, under attack from Democrats and Republicans alike. Stop FBI and other government spying, harassment and disruption.

PRISONER RIGHTS End solitary confinement. End suppression of the *Militant*, books and newspapers by prison authorities. Abolish the death penalty, an anti-working-class weapon in the hands of the rulers.

FARMERS — WORKERS ALLIES ON THE LAND To put a halt to farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and skyrocketing rural debt, we demand nationalization of the land. This puts the soil at the service of the farmers who till it, as opposed to control by the banks and landlords. We demand the government guarantee farmers their costs of production, including their living expenses.

Working people must organize and act independent of the ruling capitalists and break from their political parties — the Democrats and Republicans. For a labor party and a movement of millions to fight for these demands along a course to replace the rule of the exploitative capitalist class with a workers and farmers government.

Socialist Workers Party campaign button



Available for \$1 from campaign offices listed on page 8

Bangladesh fight for jobs, pay

Continued from front page

According to Rubana Huq, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, orders cancelled so far risk unemployment for 2 million workers.

Citing concerns over the spread of coronavirus, the government instituted a nationwide lockdown March 26 through April 4 and deployed military and police to enforce it. Large gatherings are banned, but garment plants that had outstanding orders were permitted to operate.

“This was a disaster. All public transport was closed down,” Akter said. “Workers at factories that were still running had to spend forever walking to and from work. Workers who had gone back to their villages after companies suspended production had to walk back for the scheduled reopening.”

On April 3, 1,000 workers started a 70-mile march to get back in time, a march that would take them from 18 to 28 hours. “The fear of losing my job is bigger than the fear of coronavirus,” Farzana Akter, one of the marchers, told bdnews24. She works in Dhaka, the capital, but had returned to her home village before the shutdown.

Workers rally to demand wages

Hundreds of workers showed up at the gate outside Crown Wears factory in Bhaluka, north of Dhaka, at 7 a.m. on April 6 to start work. They were met with a notice that the factory would be closed until April 14. It said information about wages owed would come later. It turns out the government had extended the lockdown until at least April 11.

Incensed, workers organized a protest blocking the highway outside the gate, demanding payment of March’s wages. The industrial police raced to the site, charged the workers with batons, and fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse them. In the melee that followed two workers who tried to run away got in front of a truck on the highway and were killed.

“There are many, many protests. Not getting their wages is the main worry for workers,” Nazma Akter said. “They are already low paid, have no reserves, and losing their income puts thousands of families in a very difficult position.”

The Somnilito union succeeded in getting an agreement from the bosses that some 8,200 workers at Natural Denims will receive full pay during the factory closure.

“But most workers are not represented by unions,” Akter said. “So they have nothing at all guaranteed. And the guarantees we have are no good if the companies go bankrupt.”

Tens of thousands of garment workers in Bangladesh have engaged in strikes and street protests over the past

decade. They have pushed back some of the worst conditions, including winning prohibition of child labor. They have won wage increases, restrictions on the length of the workday and workweek, union inspections of fire and safety standards in the factories, and legal easing of some obstacles to union organizing. Women’s entry into the workforce and participation in leading these struggles has led to changing attitudes towards women in society as a whole.

“If the crisis continues and leads to bankruptcies, we could see millions of unemployed,” Asad Sattar, director of Utah Group, a knits and wovens manufacturer, told the online Sourcing Journal March 25. “There is growing fear that this may in turn lead to unrest.”

In their pursuit of profits on the backs of cheap labor, retail giants like Walmart, Zara, Gap, Levi’s and H&M have outsourced production to capitalist bosses in a number of Asian countries over recent decades. In 1977 there were eight garment factories in Bangladesh. Today there are some 5,000, employing 4 million workers. The vast majority of them



Garment workers outside Crown Wears factory in Bhaluka, Bangladesh, organize protest April 6 demanding March wages. Showing up for work after 10-day lockdown, they were met with sign saying factory would remain closed and information on pay would come later.

are young women, who have moved into burgeoning cities from a life in rural villages.

This industrial revolution has been marked by brutal conditions with low wages, long hours at work and dangerous, often deadly, working conditions with frequent fires and factory build-

ing collapses. At the same time, the new forces brought into production have strengthened the working class in Bangladesh and the world, and produced new gravediggers of capitalism.

The garment industry accounts for 80 percent of the bosses’ exports from Bangladesh.

Toilers face brutal attacks from governments in Africa

BY TERRY EVANS

“Imperialism is determined, it has no conscience, it has no heart,” explained Thomas Sankara, the leader of the popular revolutionary government in Burkina Faso in 1985. “Fortunately the more we’ve discovered how dangerous an enemy imperialism is, the more determined we’ve become to fight and defeat it. And each time we find fresh forces ready to stand up to it.”

As the sharp capitalist economic and social crisis today spreads worldwide, it’s exacerbating already wretched conditions — the product of centuries of colonial and imperialist exploitation — that confront millions of workers, peasants and other toilers across Africa. More and more are looking for ways to defend themselves. Protests center on demands for jobs and pay.

“I would rather risk being beaten by policemen; I can’t stay home and just watch my hungry children crying,” taxi driver James Kakoza, from Kampala, Uganda, told the *Wall Street Journal* as he sought to find work.

In South Africa cops and soldiers are using whips, tear gas and rubber bullets to enforce a government lockdown that prevents workers and vendors from working. Thousands of people without permanent homes have been confined to open fields and empty school grounds by security forces.

Many of those living across the continent are routinely portrayed in the press and by capitalist politicians as helpless victims of natural disasters. Wealthy philanthropist Bill Gates sheds crocodile tears over the prospect of 10 million people dying across Africa as coronavirus spreads.

But in fact the devastating social conditions inflicted on working people there — triggered by famines, wars or epidemics like Ebola or coronavirus — are an inevitable consequence of the natural workings of capitalist exploitation. The expansion of capitalist production across the continent over decades has drawn millions out of rural isolation, into the cities and towns, beginning to create a modern capi-

talist class structure. That includes a growing working class that responds to assaults on its conditions of life by looking for ways to resist.

Several hundred working people in Tunis, the Tunisian capital, marched on local government offices March 31 to demand immediate relief and for permission to work. The government had imposed restrictions that prevent many workers from going to their jobs. One bricklayer spoke for the protesters when he shouted out, “Let us work!” Thousands joined similar actions across the country, where unemployment was 15% before the government edict.

Toilers confront imperialist plunder

Elsewhere on the continent the shutdowns in production and jobs threaten to devastate the lives of millions more, including in West African countries whose economies are hard hit by the worldwide slowdown in oil production and trade as oil prices have plummeted. Oil revenues account for more than 90% of exports and 60% of government revenue in Nigeria and Angola. Thousands of oil workers face being thrown out on the streets.

Cuba vs US: Counterposed approaches

Continued from page 2

doubled in the last few weeks. As has the price of hand sanitizer and face masks. Giant corporations like Walmart are imposing speedup on their workers to make money hand over fist while thousands of small businesses are being bankrupted.

In Cuba, they have taken the opposite class approach.

The regional government in Matanzas province has added 15 pounds a month of fresh fruits, vegetables and grains to the government-subsidized ration card, which guarantees that everyone gets basic products at low costs.

Much of the food that was being grown for the tourist trade — which has been closed for the time being — is being sent instead to hospitals and centers serving people who are under

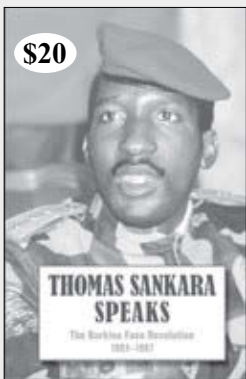
quarantine. Some of the rest is sent to local agriculture markets, at a price set a maximum of 20% higher than the ration book.

This is the opposite of what is happening in the U.S. Dairy farmers are being told by the big co-ops to dump their milk. Farmers who produced for the shuttered restaurant and hospitality market are being forced to destroy their crops and take a total loss.

The Cuban Communist Party decided March 31 they had to cancel the annual May Day march of millions to prevent further spread of the virus. At the same time, the Central Organization of Cuban Workers was asked to make new proposals on how Cubans could work together to celebrate May Day and their revolution “so that International Workers Day is not overlooked.”

For further reading ...

\$20



pathfinderpress.com

PG&E cops a plea in deaths

Continued from front page

The November 2018 Camp Fire was the most devastating fire in California history. Before it was contained, 154,000 acres had been burned, over 15,000 structures were destroyed, the town of Paradise had been leveled and over 80 people were dead.

PG&E bosses had consciously failed to maintain their equipment or to clear combustible dry brush near their transmission lines to save money. When one 100-year-old line came down in a dry spell, the resulting fire raced out of control.

Last December, PG&E agreed to a \$13.5 billion settlement for victims of the Camp Fire, the 2015 Butte Fire and a number of other fires the company has been held responsible for over the past several years. PG&E declared bankruptcy in January 2019, saying it faced potential liabilities of \$30 billion. Management hopes that the settlement will improve its prospects for emerging from bankruptcy before a court-imposed deadline in June.

Half of the \$13.5 billion is to come from PG&E stock, which has lost 57 percent of its value since February. The PG&E bankruptcy court plans to make a final ruling on the proposal by the end of May, and the deal can still unravel. Already three members of the court-appointed 11-member panel

of fire victims have resigned in opposition to the agreement.

Julie Whited lost almost everything she owned in the Camp Fire. She and her family narrowly escaped Paradise in their cars the day of the inferno. Whited, a member of Communications Workers of America, works in a domestic violence abuse center in Chico.

“I don’t think that \$13.5 billion is enough,” Whited told the *Militant* in a phone interview. “So many people were affected by the fires and they will never be able to replace what they lost.

“I was lucky,” she continued. “For many months after my home in Paradise was destroyed I was taken in by friends who live in Chico and I slept on their couch. I will always be grateful for their kindness.

“Tying our money to the value of PG&E stock is stupid,” Whited said. “My lawyer says to expect the money no sooner than early summer. There is no telling where the stock value will be at that time.”

‘For workers control of production’

“PG&E management was responsible for the devastating Camp Fire and others,” said Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress from California in the 13th District. “Management had known



Militant/Eric Simpson

Joel Britton, left, currently SWP candidate for U.S. Congress, speaks with carpenter Tony Worino in his RV at Camp Fire refugee camp in Chico, California, in December 2018.

for years that the power line that started the fire needed to be replaced. Their criminal negligence was the cause of the catastrophe.

“The settlement doesn’t do anything to address the main question at hand,” Britton said. “Workers know what is safe and what is dangerously unsafe. We need to organize ourselves to fight when the bosses create a problem. Out of these battles our unions will be transformed. PG&E should be nationalized under workers control.

“The PG&E bosses and the California and federal governments lie to working people about their production costs and profits,” Britton said. “We should demand they open their books for inspection by workers and consumers. We need to organize in our millions to fight for workers control of production, which will be a school for learning how to run the economy for ourselves in the interests of all, and a step toward taking political power into our own hands.”

Frank Gorton: Over five decades building the communist movement

BY STEVE PENNER

MONTREAL — Frank Gorton, a member and supporter of the communist movement in three different countries for over five decades, died March 30 at the age of 79. He had been hospitalized for pneumonia following a period of declining health.

Gorton joined the League for Socialist Action in Toronto in the mid-1960s, after emigrating from the United Kingdom. He moved back to the U.K. in 1967 with his companion Toni, and was a member of the International Marxist Group and then its successor, the Communist League, for over two decades. He helped wage a successful fight to win the party to get the majority of its members to work in industry and put efforts to transform the unions into instruments of class struggle at the center of building a proletarian party.

Gorton was a member of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. for 10 years in the 1990s, and a volunteer in the print shop the party op-

erated in New York, producing the *Militant* and books by party leaders and other revolutionaries. He also got jobs in auto, garment and meatpacking, where he helped build the party’s trade union fractions.

After Frank and Toni moved back to Canada in 2000, he became a supporter of the Communist League until the end of his life. The *Militant* will run an appreciation of Gorton’s political life and contributions in a future issue.



Militant/Jay Ressler

Frank Gorton, left, shows *Militant* to striking UFCW members in Toledo, Ohio, 1998.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 24, 1995

PHILADELPHIA — The “no money” chorus led by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority and Mayor Ed Rendell changed its tune here April 10, as management was forced to reach a settlement in a two-week strike by 5,200 members of Transport Workers Union Local 234.

SEPTA came up with additional funding for wages, pensions and benefits after the TWU extended its strike from city to suburban lines. Despite an injunction limiting to four the number of pickets, hundreds of strikers turned out for early-morning rallies at suburban stations.

The determination of the TWU members made it clear that the politicians’ “crazy-to-strike-in-these-hard-times” anti-labor campaign was becoming counterproductive. Many workers expressed admiration for actions by TWU members aimed at making their strike more effective.



April 24, 1970

April 15 — Hundreds of thousands marched and rallied today in major cities throughout the nation in a full day of mass actions against the war in Vietnam. More than 100,000 rallied in Boston, the biggest demonstration in the country, and in New York City, some 40,000 turned out. The message to President Nixon again resounded: Get all U.S. troops out of Vietnam now.

As part of the nationwide strike sponsored by the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, it was estimated that more than 150,000 New York students boycotted classes today.

As in other cities, youth predominated in the San Francisco protests. More than a score of GIs attended a High School SMC rally. They gathered with some 800 persons at the entrance to the Presidio Army base to hear antiwar speakers.



April 21, 1945

“You are entering Germany. Fraternization is an offense.” So read the signs posted on the frontier by the Allied High Command. The penalty for Allied soldiers caught associating with any German is a fine of up to \$65.

But the ban on fraternization isn’t working. Little by little the class meaning of the non-fraternization order begins to penetrate the consciousness of the soldiers.

In villages and towns the soldiers see miserable, poorly fed German workers in labor gangs while well-dressed Germans do nothing but sit at windows and walk in the streets. The Allied-appointed burgomaster exercises “discrimination” to exempt “respectable” Germans from this drudgery. One of the soldier’s comments: “It seems to me that we pick on the same Germans the Nazi kicked around to do the dirty work.”

Social crisis is product of capitalist rule

Continued from front page
ness means threatened disaster.

The rulers' moves have deepened an already serious crisis for dairy and other farmers. A full-scale depression like most workers have never seen could well loom on the horizon.

The International Labor Organization estimated April 7 that the equivalent of almost 200 million full-time jobs have been lost worldwide so far.

That is why the Socialist Workers Party calls for working people to fight for a massive government-funded program of public works to create jobs at union-scale wages to build what society needs urgently — hospitals, day care centers, schools and to replace the crumbling infrastructure. This is central to defending the working class today. It's vital, not only for the tens of millions thrown out of work, but for the entire working class and its allies, who are being atomized and pulverized by the unfolding capitalist crisis.

The SWP urges workers to mobilize to demand urgent government relief for all workers, small shopkeepers, and other self-employed, as well as those who toil on the land, who need it.

Workers still on the job organizing to fight the bosses' attacks on wages and working conditions are the foundation on which all progress out of this crisis will be built.

From steel mills to Walmart, to cross-country railroads and trucking, workers lucky enough to labor in industries the bosses consider "essential" to capitalism are facing speedup, more dangerous conditions and other attacks by employers driven by their thirst for profits. These come on top of the "normal" exploitation and oppression of labor that bosses use to squeeze as much as possible out of workers. Today, more than ever, it's clear that working people are the only ones who can produce what society needs.

The bosses don't care what is produced, only that it returns a profit they can appropriate. That's why they demand just-in-time delivery of parts and raw materials, so their capital isn't tied up in warehouses producing no profit. This is why there was such a shortage of hospital beds, ventilators, masks and other medical necessities crucial for when the coronavirus outbreak hit.

Since 2003 bosses have shuttered at least 16 hospitals in New York City alone, where every square foot of real estate has a price tag. When St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center was closed and torn down in 2012, developers built terraced apartments and condos in a building with a private garden, underground parking, an 80-foot-long swimming pool and a golf driving simulator.

Disdain for the working class

The situation was made worse by successive federal governments' decisions to cut health facilities. For years Veteran Affairs has left a growing number of positions in its medical facilities unfilled — over 43,000 today.

Capitalist rulers everywhere failed to act when mass testing, selective quarantining, ameliorative treatment and a crash program to develop a vaccine could have contained the virus before it became a worldwide pandemic.

They have total disdain for working people, who they consider to be "de-

plorable" that need to be controlled or they can become dangerous. The rulers' moves to impose lockdowns on millions of working families flow from this. So do their orders to shut down Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, a lifeline for those fighting to stay free from this affliction.

The capitalist rulers' panic-mongering news media seeks to get working people to fear fellow workers as potential "sources" for getting the virus. The bosses and their media enablers hope to get workers to turn on each other.

They want to try to break down our solidarity, and to prevent us from uniting to resist being saddled with the burden of their crisis.

Billionaire Microsoft owner Bill Gates and others of his ilk are proposing at least a 10-week shutdown. And the rulers are seeking stronger methods to enforce atomization of working people. While working from home is OK for wealthy and better-off professional layers, workers see their wallets emptying and no way out.

Government officials are jacking up fines for being outside, or threatening jail time. In South Africa, street peddlers desperate to make a living are being beaten by club-wielding cops and threatened with guns. In Rhode Island, Florida and elsewhere, National Guard troops are posted on a growing number of state borders to keep "outsiders" out.

In Kentucky, a Louisville judge ordered ankle bracelets to be fitted to anyone deemed not complying with Gov. Andy Beshear's order for everyone to stay home.

The rulers' shutdowns have resulted in an unprecedented closure of production and commerce, with at least a quarter of the U.S. economy idled in the first week of April. U.S. daily output fell almost a third from the first week of last month.

The Labor Department reported that over 700,000 jobs were lost in March. Bosses and governments ordered restaurants, bars, retail outlets, auto plants, construction sites, state government social services, and so-called nonurgent health care facilities to close. In some states this included banning a woman's right to have an abortion.

In the first week of April, nearly a million retail workers were told to stay home indefinitely without pay. Some 60,000 stores have been shuttered in recent weeks and most shopping malls are empty.

Many of these "temporary" closures

are likely to become permanent, as struggling small business owners see their nest eggs disappear. Three-quarters of the U.S. population say they've suffered losses of income. Working people will face foreclosure on homes, cars and farms as they fall behind paying debts to the landlords and banks.

Capitalism's immorality

Nowhere is the moral bankruptcy of capitalism made more bare than over the life-and-death issue of which gravely ill patients will get access to life-saving ventilators, the numbers of which are limited because of government inaction. From hospital bosses in New York City to "medical ethics experts," the immoral answer is "giving priority to younger patients and those with fewer existing conditions."

This class immorality was answered by Roger Severino, director of the federal health department's civil rights office. "Our civil rights laws protect the equal dignity of every human life from ruthless utilitarianism," he said in a news release March 28. "Persons with disabilities, with limited English skills and older persons should not be put at the end of the line

for health care during emergencies." Nor should it matter whether they have immigration documents or not.

The only decisive answer to the class warfare of the bosses against workers, farmers and all those exploited and oppressed by capital is to build a movement of millions to wrest political power out of their hands and replace it with a workers and farmers government. Today's struggles can point in that direction.



Miles of cars wait to get to Pittsburgh community food bank March 30. Tini Mason, 44, just out of job as a cook, said it was a "mind-blowing experience I will never forget."

US rulers deploy the National Guard, target workers' jobs, rights

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As the economic and social crisis facing working people unfolding today deepens, the capitalist rulers are taking aim at our political and constitutional rights. One aspect of this is the deployment of over 18,500 Air and Army National Guard troops in all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico, Washington, D.C., Guam and the Virgin Islands. And the deployment is growing.

State governors, with authority from Washington to call up National Guard forces, have wide leeway in how to use them. So far, they've been deployed two major ways. One is to replace construction and other workers, who've been sent home, in building hospitals and other projects. The other is to back or replace the cops in "crowd control" of working people as police fall sick.

This deployment to construction comes in the midst of spreading depression conditions where millions of construction and other workers have lost their jobs. The rulers prefer to keep these workers atomized and at home rather than to put them to work building hospitals and other things workers sorely need today. These workers have precisely the knowledge and skills to do this work and more. But they haven't been trained in "crowd control."

National Guard forces are also being used as cops. "Anything that the law enforcement capacity normally does, they could be augmented with National Guard," Gen. Joseph Lengyel, chief of the National Guard Bureau, said at a news conference at the end of March. This can include enforcing government stay-at-home orders. And, they make it clear, Guard members are permitted to carry — and use — their weapons.

"In some states, individuals who violate emergency orders can be detained without charge and held in isolation," noted the *Wall Street Journal*.

Some politicians are calling for deployment of the army as well. "We Should Prepare Now to Send U.S. Armed Forces to Help Police in Hard-Hit Areas," headlined an April 1 *Washington Post* opinion column written by several prominent military and police officials, including John Allen, who commanded U.S. Marines in Iraq and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

"With 15 percent of the New York City Police Department recently reporting sick due to illness or self-quarantine," the article said, "and even higher

Farmers forced to dump milk

Continued from front page

"Throwing away milk? It makes me sick. It's disgusting," Jerry Wastlick, who works with his brother milking 40 cows in Wonewoc, Wisconsin, told the *Militant* April 6. "There were milk contracts with schools. Now the kids are at home. They could use that milk, and the cheese for pizza."

"We haven't been affected yet. But it's scary. If you have to dump it there's no insurance," he said. "I do know the price [we get] has been going down. We don't know if it's long-term or short-term."

Government lockdowns and their mandated mass closure of restaurants and schools have forced a sudden shift from wholesale food services to retail grocery stores, but the need to reconfigure packaging machinery and distribution chains for processing milk, butter and cheese means bosses have to cut back. Milk and cream are perishables that can't be stored for long. And sales to major export markets have dried up as shutdowns have been imposed worldwide.

Capitalist crisis hits family farmers

So farmers are being told to cut production. The bosses of Wisconsin-based Foremost Farms USA went further than just requiring farmers to dump their milk. In a March 17 letter, they warned ominously, "Now is the time to consider a little extra culling of your herds."

The growing crisis of capitalism is driving more working farmers deeper into crushing debt or off the land alto-

gether. This is the result of the inevitable workings of the system of exploitative capitalist social relations on the land, which is exacerbated by floods, disease or other natural causes. Smaller-scale family farmers are hit particularly hard.

They're caught in a vise with costs of inputs from seeds, pesticides and machinery rising, while the price they get for milk has fallen nearly 40% in the past five years. More of the share of wealth generated by their toil is being taken by capitalist monopolies — the banks and agribusiness suppliers on the one hand, and the big processing firms and large grocery chains on the other.

Family farms, many of which are handed down from generation to generation, face skyrocketing debts and are going under in this squeeze. The concentration of farmland and especially of production in the hands of big capitalist operations keeps growing. Some megafarms with herds in the thousands, not hundreds, and with highly mechanized round-the-clock operations yield more milk per cow.

The number of farms in the U.S., as in other imperialist countries, continues its historical decline. In 2017, more than half the milk cows were on dairies with herds of more than 1,000 compared to only 20% two decades ago. While the number of milk cows has halved in the last century, milk production has more than doubled.

Wisconsin dairy farmer Brittany Olson told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that when she hears that "small farms



Kimberly Elbe/Golden E Dairy
Big processors have pressured dairy farms small and large, like Golden E Dairy in Wisconsin, with 2,400 cows, to dump milk. Yet working families face growing shortages of dairy goods.

like ours likely have no future, it makes me feel like little more than a peasant in a system of modern-day feudalism."

"In order to keep small family farms in business, we have to have a living wage," Cindy and Steve Schmitz, Wisconsin dairy farmers, told the *Militant*. The Socialist Workers Party champions the demand for working farmers to be guaranteed their costs of production, including family living expenses.

The party's 2020 campaign platform demands nationalization of the land "to put a halt to farm foreclosures, bankruptcies and skyrocketing rural debt. This puts the soil in the service of farmers who till," which was the policy of the Cuban Revolution.

Meat, fruit and vegetable producers are also being hit by the shift from wholesale to retail distribution. Normally plentiful products are running short on grocery shelves.

"This is a crisis within the crisis," Karl Butts, 67, a Florida market gardener, told the *Militant* April 6. He

was referring to the sharpening of the capitalist crisis as government shutdown policies have affected both the tourist trade there and forced wholesale markets to close.

"Prices dropped as demand dropped" for fresh produce, Butts said. "Sellers who can't sell, end up dumping their produce. Many farmers are forced to plow crops back in because they can't recoup the costs of harvesting or picking."

Government-mandated quarantines of seasonal immigrant farmworkers have affected many of the 60,000 temporary workers in Canada and nearly 250,000 in the U.S. The less produce that reaches markets, the more prices will soar.

"If the farm doesn't produce, the city doesn't eat," Abad Hernandez Cruz, a Mexican farmworker employed in the onion harvest in Georgia, told Reuters.

Randy Jasper in Wisconsin contributed to this article.

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Fidel: ‘Voluntary work was one of best things Che left us’

Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism by Carlos Tablada is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for April. It was originally published in Cuba in 1987 as part of the rectification process initiated by Fidel Castro. This involved the mobilization of working people in a political fight to reverse damage from years of bureaucratic economic planning Cuba adopted in the early 1970s modeled on those of the Stalinist Soviet regime. Fidel led this fight, calling for a revival of the political and economic course championed by Ernesto Che Guevara, which is outlined in the book. Excerpts from the introduction are printed below. Copyright © 1998. Reprinted by permission of Pathfinder Press.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

In the 1987 speech that serves as a prologue to this book, [Fidel] Castro remarks that “at a given moment some of Che’s ideas were incorrectly interpreted and, what’s more, incorrectly applied. Certainly no serious attempt was ever made to put them into practice, and there came a time when ideas diametrically opposed to Che’s economic thought began to take over.” ... By the early 1980s, however, the devastating political consequences of the course that had been copied and



Militant/Terry Coggan

Volunteer workers build new apartment building in Havana, January 1988. Fidel Castro said renewal of widespread voluntary labor, originally advocated by Che Guevara, achieved what state bureaucrats said was impossible — building 20,000 new housing units in the capital.

imported were becoming increasingly clear as communist political consciousness among Cuba’s working people faltered, demoralization spread, and corruption grew. ...

By 1986 Cuba’s communist leadership, with Fidel Castro in the lead, had launched the revolutionary political counteroffensive on questions of economic policy that became known as the rectification process. Corruption and privilege were systematically addressed and substantially reduced. Living and working conditions of agricultural workers and others in the lowest-paid categories were improved. Child care and other needs of women workers were given new priority.

From the outset of the rectification process, volunteer labor — “one of the best things [Che] left us during his stay in our country and his part in the revolution,” said Castro — was revived in Cuba. It was promoted by the leadership as a lever of revolutionary action to take steps forward, through collective efforts, to address the most pressing social needs such as housing, nurseries, clinics, and schools. For some fifteen years, Castro said, such efforts had been steadily on the decline because of “the bureaucrat’s view, the technocrat’s view that voluntary work was neither basic nor essential,” but rather “kind of silly, a waste of time.” Beginning in 1986, however, voluntary labor was reborn. The construction “minibrigades,” as they were called,

assumed an even greater centrality to the revolution and working class than similar efforts during the early years of the Cuban or Russian revolutions.

Rectification took on the character of a growing social movement led by Cuba’s most conscious and disciplined working people who were convinced that the brigades opened the road toward a return to proletarian methods that could advance the revolution and strengthen social consciousness.

Just as the bureaucratic parties and regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR were finally beginning to shatter in face of irresolvable economic, social, and political crises building up for decades, the Cuban revolution was gaining strength along the lines of the communist political course of rectification. This renewal, Fidel explained in his October 1987 tribute, would have given Guevara much joy and confidence, just as he would have been “appalled” by what had preceded it. Because, Castro said, Che “knew that communism could never be attained by wandering down those worn capitalist paths and that to follow along those paths would mean eventually to forget all ideas of solidarity and even internationalism.”

As the rectification process was gaining new momentum in 1989, the Cuban revolution was suddenly confronted with the most severe economic crisis in its history. The crisis was precipitated by the abrupt decline in

aid and trade on favorable terms with the disintegrating regimes in the Soviet bloc. The “special period,” as it is known in Cuba, registered a decline in economic production estimated at some 35 percent — equal to or greater than the fall in U.S. output during the opening years of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Stepped-up efforts by Cuba’s revolutionary government to find new trading partners and sources of development capital were met by intensified economic warfare instigated and organized by Washington.

Enemies of the working class the world over gleefully predicted that the revolutionary government of Cuba would soon suffer a fate similar to the regimes of Eastern Europe and the USSR. Once again they were wrong. They failed to understand — as they had many times before — that the proletarian internationalist course Che’s name was associated with in Cuba and around the world was not his alone, but was indeed the trajectory of Cuba’s communist leadership, deeply rooted among the big majority of Cuba’s working people. This was not a variant of the course in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but its antipode.

No other government in the world could have survived the test of popular support that Cuba’s revolutionary leadership has faced in the 1990s. In meeting the challenge of the special period, moreover, the Cuban working class has emerged stronger, not weaker. Today it is more conscious of its historic responsibilities, and more confident of its collective capacity to resist, to fight, and to win. The rectification process of the previous decade was decisive in this outcome. ...

What Cuba faces today is not a crisis of socialism, however. Above all, the Cuban toilers are confronting the brutal realities of an economically underdeveloped country in a world still dominated by capitalism, and the terms of struggle imposed by the exploiting classes on those who are determined to chart a way forward for humanity. ...

It is the capitalist world that will face the gravest crisis in the years ahead. “The exploiters are starting to get afraid again,” Castro noted. “They’re afraid of social upheaval, afraid of social explosions, afraid of chaos . . . because they don’t really know what’s going to happen.”

April

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Join fights over jobs, wages, conditions

Continued from front page

pay for their crisis — as they are doing by speeding up production, pressing workers to do more and reducing real wages.

Growing joblessness and spreading lockdowns will sap the strength, morale and fighting capacities of the working class. Bosses will use it as a lever to press us to accept less pay and worse conditions. At every step they seek to foster competition between workers. Today's furloughs deepen our isolation and exacerbate every other problem workers face.

The working class has to protect itself from the impact of spreading depression conditions and fight to overcome the biggest division we face — between those in and out of work.

Socialist Workers Party members are involved in skirmishes and struggles being waged on the shop floor in workplaces around the country — from Walmart to the railroads, taking initiatives with co-workers to push back the bosses' attacks, organizing solidarity and looking for ways to extend these fights.

- To strengthen our struggles the Socialist Workers Party urges workers to fight for a massive government-funded public works program to put millions back to work *now* at union-scale wages, to build the hospitals, housing and other essentials working people need. Above all, such a fight will strengthen and unite us for bigger struggles that are coming. In contrast, the government says to hunker down at home to wait for a "recovery," while it helps the bosses dump the burden of the crisis on our backs. Workers have everything to gain and nothing to lose by fighting for jobs and going to work.

We should demand the government put laid-off construction workers to work instead of the National Guard to build field hospitals. Let the workers who have the skills and know-how to work safely construct vital medical facilities, with union protection.

Capitalist politicians and the bosses' media, and sometimes our union officials, urge workers to subordinate everything to "combat the virus" — a call to subordinate our interests to their profit-driven

system. The bosses will never put their profit drive "on hold." Neither should workers abandon efforts to defend ourselves from what they seek to impose.

To try to get us to turn on fellow workers they encourage us to point fingers at each other for "spreading" the virus. They fine and threaten to jail us if we don't stay at home. They hope they can deter us from waging determined struggles against the conditions we face — conditions created by the crisis of their system.

But working people worldwide can discover our own capacities through common class-struggle action against those who exploit us. As workers gain such experiences we become battle-tested and more open to recognizing our own capacities to transform our conditions, to organize and fight to end the exploitative social relations dog-eat-dog capitalism depends on.

The SWP 2020 campaign has a button that features two slogans: "Build a labor party" and "For workers control of production."

- To prevent the bosses from producing shoddy and dangerous goods, or refusing to make what workers need, and lying about their costs, workers need to wrest more and more control of production. This is the only road to control the pace of production and safety on the job and for consumers as well. And organizing production will be a school for workers to learn how to run the whole economy in the interests of the vast majority.
- To fight effectively workers need their own party, a labor party. A party that joins in fights on the shop floor and on the streets 365 days a year. A party that organizes working people to lead all the exploited and oppressed to overthrow the bosses' capitalist government and take political power into our own hands.

In today's crisis there will be growing opportunities to draw workers towards a party that fights for this course. Join the SWP and the party's candidates around the country participating in workers' actions today and advancing a resolute class-struggle road forward.

Strike against Asarco union busting continues

BY BERNIE SENTER
AND DEBORAH LIATOS

"We're still standing strong and have no trouble keeping the picket lines going," striking copper miner Lyle Murphy told the *Militant* by phone April 7. Murphy is president of United Steelworkers Local 5252 in Kearny, Arizona, and has worked at the Ray Mine 16 years.

Six months into a bitter strike against copper mining giant Asarco, 1,700 miners in Arizona and Amarillo, Texas, members of the Steelworkers, Teamsters and five other unions, have been fighting the company's drive to bust their unions.

The bosses have demanded extending the decadelong wage freeze for most workers, hiking up health care costs, and restricting the unions' right to protect workers on the job.

Despite government-imposed restrictions in response to the coronavirus, "everyone's doing a hell of a job," Murphy said. "We keep the lines down to six people now. No kids. No pets. The union provides everything strikers need — food, water, disinfectant." Murphy said the company is still operating the Ray Mine, which the government told bosses they consider an "essential" business.

Pickets also remain up at the Hayden smelter. It's a "constitutionally protected" activity, USW Local 886 President Greg Romero said March 31.

That same day at the Mission and Silver Bell mines outside of Tucson, "we decided to shut down the picket lines for now," USW Local 937 recording secretary and working miner Eduardo Placencio said. "But we're still on strike. We still have the food pantry going Monday through Friday," and union benefits continue.

A similar decision was made to temporarily cut

back picketing at the Asarco refinery in Amarillo for at least two weeks.

"Two picket captains staff the shack Tuesday through Friday from 12 to 6 p.m.," Leonardo Segura, vice president of USW Local 5613 and picket captain for the strike there, told the *Militant*. "We still have the food pantry at the union hall open where strikers can pick up groceries and grocery store cards."

Since the day the walkout started in October, solidarity has come in for the strikers from workers in the area and beyond, and visits to the picket lines by retirees, former Asarco miners, family members and other working people. Messages of support have come in, as well as food, financial and other donations.

The company keeps some production going, with workers who have crossed the picket lines, replacement workers, nonunion contractors and supervisors.

Send solidarity messages and donations to USW Local 915 Strike Assistance, P.O. Box 550, Kearny, AZ 85137; USW Local 5252 Strike Assistance, P.O. Box 896, Kearny, AZ 85137; USW Local 5613, 4230 Texas Hwy 136, Amarillo, TX 79108; or via paypal.me/palfcommunityservice for Tucson-area strikers. Solidarity messages can be sent to palfchair@gmail.com. Contribute to the food pantries at: USW 915 and 886 hall, 107 Hammond Dr., Kearny; IBEW Local 570 hall, 750 S. Tucson Blvd., Tucson; USW Local 5613, 4230 Texas Hwy 136, Amarillo, Texas.

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the 'Militant' and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at www.themilitant.com

Bailout for the bosses

Continued from front page

Both the Democrats and Republicans — the twin parties of the capitalist rulers — have stopped holding election rallies and most primaries have been postponed. But the fight over who should occupy the White House continues to simmer.

President Donald Trump's poll numbers have risen, increasing many Democrats' fear that they have little chance of defeating him with Joe Biden as their candidate. While Biden tries to get press coverage from his Delaware estate, issuing online critiques of Trump, the president gets widespread coverage every day touting his hands-on management of the crisis.

Editors of liberal newspapers continue to spout venom at Trump, claiming he is responsible for the spread of coronavirus. In fact, both parties and the capitalist bosses they speak for bear that responsibility. Their drive for profits means they give no attention to advance preparations for hurricanes, drought or disease, and working people pay for it.

Democrats' shining knight emerges

Some liberals have gone gaga over New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, hoping to find a way to get him inserted as the Democrats' presidential candidate. Like Trump, Cuomo's elected position means he has daily access to widespread media coverage.

Cuomo's "sermons," gushed Joshua Chaffin in the April 3 *Financial Times*, are like "Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats during the Depression." These "chats" in the 1930s were aimed at convincing workers to abandon hard-fought union battles — and any thoughts of forming a labor party based on their unions. Instead, Roosevelt argued, it was time to subordinate their interests to "national unity" with the bosses as the second imperialist war neared.

Cuomo's call for workers to subordinate their interests to a classless effort to "fight the virus," similar to calls coming from other statehouses, is coupled with assaults on vitally needed constitutional rights. Cops have "visited" thousands of small stores and restaurants, demanding to see what steps have been taken to close down. The governor doubled fines and threatened arrests for unauthorized people going outside. And, if the cops have trouble, the National Guard is ready to step in.

All the politicians for the ruling rich blame working people for the economic and social crisis, and are trying to get us to turn against each other, looking for culprits in spreading disease. Their goal is to hide the fact that it is the bosses' efforts to protect their crisis-ridden, exploitative capitalist system that is the source of what workers face today.

Unlike the Democrats and Republicans, the Socialist Workers Party and its 2020 candidates refuse to subordinate workers' interests to the bosses. They explain workers need to get back to work and join resistance to the bosses' attacks.

Bipartisan package to defend the bosses

Both the bosses' parties agreed on a bipartisan \$2 trillion "assistance" package March 27, to limit the impact of the deepening crisis on the capitalist class. The measure was presented as a way to provide some relief to workers who had been laid off. In fact, its key provisions gave billions to bosses in industries the rulers consider essential to their overall class interests. These include the airlines and railroads, steel mills and defense contractors like Boeing, which makes fighter jets used in the wars the rulers wage around the world.

The package provides loans to bosses in the auto industry and eased restrictions on bank lending. Hotel bosses were lavished with loans, grants and tax breaks.

The bill was promoted around a promised \$1,200 one-time payout to some working people. But you're ineligible if you haven't filed taxes, are one of the millions of workers without papers, or are delinquent with child support payments.

Nothing in the package was aimed at meeting the most pressing challenge workers face — getting the millions thrown out of work back into jobs at union-scale wages.

Both parties are now haggling over what should go into a further "aid" measure. Neither of them is capable of addressing the roots of the problem — the crisis of the capitalist system itself, marked by decades of declining profits rates, attacks on workers' wages and working conditions and increased national frictions.